

Appl. No. 10/694,593

Amdt. dated 2/14/06

Reply to Advisory action of January 24, 2006

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Reconsideration of the application is requested.

Claims 1-21 remain in the application and are subject to examination. Claims 20 and 21 have been amended. Claims 1-19 have been allowed.

In "Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102", item 2 on page 2 of the Final Office Action dated October 14, 2005, claims 20 and 21 have been rejected as being fully anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,162,741 to Akasaka et al. (hereinafter Akasaka) under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b).

Applicants had argued in a Response filed January 9, 2006, that there is no teaching in the figures or description of Akasaka that:

the temperature may be increased from a defined temperature to a process temperature during the treatment step as in claim 20 of the instant application; or

the metallization structure is subjected to a nonaqueous hydrogen-containing substance immediately before the treatment step as recited in claim 21 of the instant application.

However, in the Advisory Action, the Examiner has argued that the treatment step in Akasaka may be considered to be steps 5-7 as a whole.

Appl. No. 10/694,593

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The rejection and the Examiner's comments have been noted and the claims have been amended in an effort to even more clearly define the invention of the instant application.

Claims 20 now calls for, *inter alia*:

performing a hydrogen/water treatment step which includes subjecting the metallization structure to a mixture of hydrogen and water throughout the whole hydrogen/water treatment step and supplying heat;

subjecting the metallization structure to a nonaqueous hydrogen-containing substance, before and, optionally, after the hydrogen/water treatment step; and

during the hydrogen/water treatment step, setting a supply of the heat such that a temperature of the metallization structure is increased from a defined temperature to a process temperature.

Claims 21 now calls for, *inter alia*:

performing a hydrogen/water treatment step which includes subjecting the metallization structure to a mixture of hydrogen and water throughout the whole hydrogen/water treatment step and supplying heat; and

subjecting the metallization structure to a nonaqueous hydrogen-containing substance, immediately before and, optionally, after the hydrogen/water treatment step.

Support for the changes is found in the description and drawings of the instant application.

In view of the present amendments, steps 5 to 7 of Fig. 5 of Akasaka can no longer be equated with the steps of claims 20 and 21. The newly defined "hydrogen/water treatment step" of

Appl. No. 10/694,593

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amended claims 20 and 21 can only be read on step 7 of Fig. 5 of Akasaka. As a consequence thereof, amended claims 20 and 21 are believed to be novel and non-obvious over Akasaka.

Clearly, Akasaka shows neither increasing a temperature of the metallization structure during the hydrogen/water treatment step as recited in claim 20, nor subjecting the metallization structure to a nonaqueous hydrogen-containing substance immediately before the hydrogen/water treatment step as recited in claim 21, of the instant application.

It is accordingly believed to be clear that none of the references, whether taken alone or in any combination, either show or suggest the features of claims 20 and 21. Claims 20 and 21 are, therefore, believed to be patentable over the art.

In view of the foregoing, reconsideration and allowance of claims 20 and 21 and the issuance of a Notice of Allowance for claims 1-21, are solicited.

In the event the Examiner should still find any of the claims to be unpatentable, counsel would appreciate receiving a telephone call so that, if possible, patentable language can be worked out.

Appl. No. 10/694,593

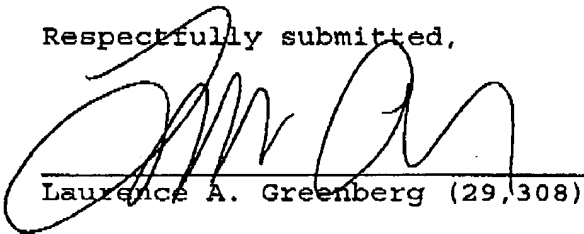
Amdt. dated 2/14/06

Reply to Advisory action of January 24, 2006

Petition for extension is herewith made. The extension fee for response within a period of one month pursuant to Section 1.136(a) in the amount of \$120.00 in accordance with Section 1.17 is enclosed herewith.

Please charge any other fees that might be due with respect to Sections 1.16 and 1.17 to the Deposit Account of Lerner Greenberg Stemer LLP, No. 12-1099.

Respectfully submitted,


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LAG/am

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